

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR MPOL GR US

SUBJECT: PRESS REACTION TO VISIT OF USS TALBOT

1. ATHENS PRESS REACTION TO THE VISIT AUG 30 TO SEP 4 OF THE FRIGATE USS TALBOT WAS VERY LOW KEY. EVEN RIZOSPASTIS, THE ORGAN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR (KKE-EXTERIOR), WHICH RECENTLY HAS MADE A HABIT OF DAILY BLASTS AGAINST VISITING US SHIPS OR US MILITARY EXERCISES IN AND AROUND GREECE, DID NOT REACH ITS CUSTOMARY PITCH. BOTH RIZOSPASTIS AND AVGHI DEVOTED MORE SPACE TO A MEETING ORGANIZED BY LEFTIST GROUPS TO PROTEST AGAINST THE TALBOTS VISIT AND THE US MILITARY PRESENCE IN GREECE.

2. PRESS COVERAGE BEGAN ON AUG 31 WITH SEVERAL PAPERS REPORTING THE TALBOTS ARRIVAL. ONLY RIZOSPASTIS AND AVGHI GAVE IT FRONT PAGE TREATMENT; RIZOSPASTIS BANNERED "SPY SHIP IN PIRAEUS" AND NOTED THAT LEAFLETS  
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WERE BEING DIDSTIBUTED IN PIRAEUS CALLING FOR A PROTEST

MARCH ON THE SHIP THAT EVENING.

3. A PROTEST MEETING WAS HELD IN THE PIRAEUS MUNICIPAL THEATER AUG 31. AN EMBASSY OBSERVER PRESENT IN THE SQUARE OUTSIDE THE TEHEATER REPORTED CROWD OF ABOUT 250 ON THE THEATER STEPS LISTENING TO PROTEST STATEMENTS OVER LOUDSPEAKERS FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS. EQUAL NUMBERS OF MUNICIPAL POLICE WERE PRESENT PERMITTING ACCESS TO AND FROM THE TEATER BUT DISCOURAGING ONLOOKERS FROM GATHERING AROUND THE SQUARE. AS THE MEETING BROKE UP THERE WAS NO APPARENT ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE A MARCH TWOARD THE TALBOT'S MOORING, ABOUT A MILE AWAY.

4. THE NEXT DAYS COVERAGE WAS THE HEAVIEST DURING THE VISIT, EMPHASIZING THE EVENTS OF THE PROTEST MEETING. RIZOSPASTIS CARRIED A BANNER HEADLINE -- "OUT WITH THE SIXTH FLEET, OUT WITH THE AMERICANS", A PICTURE OF AN AUDIENCE WHICH APPEARED TO BE A FEW HUNDRED PEOPLE INSIDE THE THEATER, AND AN EDITORIAL STATING THAT THE TALBOTS PRESENCE AND THE RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS ON US BASES PROVED THE GOVERNMENT IS WORKING AGAINST THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. THE ACCOMPANYING ARTICLE SAID THAT THE MEETING HAD BEEN ORGANIZED BY THE YOUTH GROUPS OF ALL THE OPPOSITION PARTIES. IT ALSO CLAIMED THAT SEVERAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND LOCAL MAYORS ADDRESSED THE MEETING. (A DEPUTY MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE HAS DENIED TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT HE WAS PRESENT.) AVGHI'S COVERAGE WAS SIMILAR. SEVERAL OTHER PAPERS REPORTED THAT THE MEETING HAD TAKEN PLACE. ESTIMATES OF THE CROWD RANGED FROMOVER 200 IN ELEFTHERTYPIA (LEFTIST OPPOSITION) TO 3000 IN RIZOSPASTIS WITH THE POLICE ESTIMATING A TOTAL OF AROUND 800.

5. PRESS INTEREST LAPSED ON SUBSEQUENT DAYS WITH ONLY RIZOSPASTIS CLAIMING IN SHORT DAILY ARTICLES THAT THE TALBOTS CONTINUED PRESENCE WAS ALLEGEDLY CAUSING INCREASING INDIGNATION AMONG THE PEOPLE OF PIRAEUS. ON AUG 7 A FEW PAPERS, BUT NOT RIZOSPASTIS OR AVGHI, REPORTED THE TALBOTS DEPARTURE.

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## Message Attributes

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